



FASHION INTERNATIONAL

NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FASHION WORLD

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FEMININE AND FLIRTY

Spring 2004

This season, feminine and flirty silhouettes in a citrus rainbow of color, especially bright greens and pinks, were the order of the day. Bermuda shorts, alias the skinny short, flowing chiffon dresses in a melange of feminine colors and the classic fitted suit took over the runways.

KENNETH COLE

Characteristically, Cole's spring line featured simple slim and fashion-forward silhouettes: overall a more urban version of "The O.C." (TV drama), with hair slicked back and shinny skin for a beach wet feel. Black, khaki, white, pale grayish blue, yellow and cornflower blue

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FORM AND FUNCTION

Spring Menswear

For those menswear retailers interested in one-stop-shopping, The Collective, held at the Piers, offered a well-edited yet comprehensive mix of American and European designer labels in all price categories. FI scoped out the various collections, and was impressed with the diversity. In addition to RTW, The Collective offered a well edited

selection of accessories – from shoes to watches.

Spring 2004 offers the well-dressed male a fresh approach to the classics and a strong emphasis on more casual clothes. Knitwear collections were especially attractive and offered interesting color combinations juxtaposed

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YEOHLEE

were the predominant colors. Key were shorts, especially the knee length skinny shorts, and chain detailing. Black satin pants sported chain belts while, our favorite, the ultra low-back dress, embellished with chain shoulder straps had additional chain accents decorating the base of the back. There were also great pieces for the cool and classic, as well as for the young or the young at heart. A beautiful cornflower blue V-neck sweater over a simple crisp white shirt had a great preppie look, and for those who enjoy mixing it up, a pair of carpenter blue denim pants with chain belt was perfect paired with a sleeveless, satin low neck blouse set off with a tie.

TRACY REESE

Reese showed her collection fairly early in the week and, for her fans, it could not have come soon enough! Using the title Love & Happiness was certainly fitting. Her silhouettes, exemplifying the adjectives wonderful, flirty and feminine, came in a fruit basket of bright colors. Of the many extraordinary pieces, the ivory couture twill little double-breasted jacket over tomato peek-a-boo shell and pool blue embroidered yoke skirt, as well as the sweet and sour scarf pintucked blouse with citron swirling paisley shorts come quickly to mind. However, her knowledge of color is undeniable in an outstanding combination comprised of black tweed



TULEH

little jacket worn over sun-light jellyfish slouchy cami-sole and tomato couture twill back-belt pants.

TULEH

Oh the coats! In pink and white silk brocade, lilac cotton tweed, khaki cotton canvas, etc., women need look no further than Tuleh for a

spring coat. Overall the collection exemplified lady-like femininity and featured wonderful chiffon dresses in happy colors such as coral, and floral prints. Our choice of a great look — the metallic tweed jacket over agray and white polka dotted silk chiffon top worn with silver

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EYE ON FABRICS and FIBERS

*Spring 2004 and
Fall/Winter 2004/2005*

In this report, we focus on both fiber innovations and color trends. Fiber innovation does not have to be expensive. For instance, the Bernardo Company has made its mission to deliver fashion for a price. It is also apparent that the designers, having embraced color for the past few seasons, will continue to show strong colors in their showrooms for spring and into Autumn/Winter 2004/2005.

PART I: TEXTILE AND FABRIC INNOVATIONS

Lenpur TM: A Cultivated Wood Fiber

Made in California, the Lenpur fiber has been on the market since 1999. Lenpur comes from the pulp of a tree and, in its pure form, has a spongy feel. The Lenpur program is "eco-friendly"; the branches, not the trees, are cut to harvest the fiber. We first heard about Lenpur from PR representative Giancarlo Turra of Texinpro, the firm in charge of PR and worldwide distribution for Lenpur.

In our interview, Mr. Turra maintained that the applications for Lenpur are seemingly



GREEF DESIGN STUDIO (Le Cirque Arabesque)

infinite: so far, it has been used in terry cloth towels, bathrobes, ski, cycling/snowboard socks, and Futon bed stuffing to name only a few of its applications. There is also a cashmere program going on with "one of the best manufacturers in Italy," although Mr. Turra was not at liberty to name clients. The Lenpur fiber is sought after in the luxury market because of the quality of softness it brings when mixed with other fibers. This makes it ideally suited for items that need to be soft, such as underwear. It also has a

superior absorption capability, keeping the wearer cool and dry by containing sweat. The company is currently studying how to make Lenpur tees and underwear.

Texinpro has also introduced Lenpur to the burgeoning home market. To date, applications include pillow covers and duvets. Texinpro's ultimate goal for the fiber is "to get into

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metallic trousers.

YEOHLEE

The show began with a dramatic magician-like entrance, the first model wearing what was functioning as the curtain — a rectangle in black bi-stretch gabardine — in other words, a "curtain cloak". And the show only got better! Presenting a simple, very elegant collection using geometric shapes in great materials provided for a very futuristic clean feel. Yet, each design seemed timeless and could easily be worn by a woman of any age. The sleeveless black turtle halter with white silk satin organdy five-square skirt was perfect — absolutely beautiful and flowing. Equally so was the rich looking spring green silk zibeline halter vest, worn over a turtle halter jersey and a green silk zibeline high-waist hourglass skirt!

OSCAR DE LA RENTA

Oscar presented a beautiful collection, which began with two feminine Balenciaga-inspired strapless cotton dresses with full skirts, one in white and one in yellow. The collection's variety of fabrics included chiffon, tulle, satin, and taffeta (in red and pink). Larger-than-life black earrings were the accessory du jour, worn by pinkish/lavender lipped models. One of the sexiest of the looks, though classic, was a wonderful high-oc-

tane bright yellow alligator jacket over a yellow and white cashmere striped sweater and white cotton skirt, finished off by cognac leather strappy sandals.

CAROLINA HERRERA

This spring, her collection found its inspiration in Henri Lartigue's photographs of the French Riviera. Herrera's wonderful easy silhouettes were made even more elegant in a color palette consisting of citron, burnt sienna, ivory, cherry blossom, black, white, gray, and beige: consider, an ivory jacket with a burnt sienna piping over a burnt sienna sweater and ivory pants. The racer-back was favored for many of the tops and dresses, such as the lovely ivory racer-back, tank dress in chiffon with black appliquéd motif. For formal evenings, look no further than the cherry blossom jersey gown with appliquéd ribbon straps and diamond shape detailing on the back, through which fabric was draped.

TOMMY HILFIGER

Hilfiger's spring collection was filled with color. His palette, as with many designers, consisted of a predominance of brights — almost a return to neon, but deeper in tone. It looked a bit like Trix breakfast cereal. Here suits and sports jackets came in sky blue, white and fuchsia. Two must-have dresses are the hot pink/green/yellow/orange pieced chiffon halter dress and the hot pink silk chiffon dress with grosgrain wrapped bodice.

WRAPPING UP WITH PERRY ELLIS, JENNIFER NICHOLSON, ALICE ROI

A walk-through presentation allowed for an up-close view at Perry Ellis. The women's colors were primarily soft pastels. Accessories added to the femininity with oversized faux flowers accenting pearl necklaces and pearl belts finished with ribbon ties. A standout was a lavender suit. Its pleated knee length skirt and belted jacket complemented by a delicate blouse that had a choker collar with tie and ruffled cuffs. Jennifer Nicholson's feminine side had a biker chick edge. Her collection consisted of flirty little dresses in materials such as leather, lace and chiffon juxtaposed with motorcycle boots. Her two bird print dresses lent the collection a touch of the tropics. Although inspired by Georgia O'Keefe, Alice Roi's collection did not have that rustic southwestern look. Instead, she chose to use O'Keefe's flowers and palette to decorate her sophisticated, ladylike pieces. The desert colors, such as adobe, night sky, insignia blue pearl, and clay wax, as well as Calla Lilies, on camisoles, blouses and skirts, combined to create a very wearable collection. Our favorite was the insignia blue pearl organza top with Calla Lily sleeve over insignia blue pants.

NATURE'S WAY

Cruise 2004

The annual Swim Association party and fashion show is always an eagerly anticipated event for both press and buyers, and this year was no exception. Held at The Supper Club, the joint was jumping with industry insiders looking to check out the latest trends.

Nature inspired elements are key for cruise. Designers play up gold, silver and shell embellishments, natural fabrics and details that include intricate lacing, chains, ring detailing, draping and cutouts. Also important are offbeat tropical floral and botanical prints, as well as non-traditional floral looks, retro prints and Asian motifs. Stripes make a bold statement and come in variations — horizontal, vertical, diagonal — all paired with cool, cheery colors for fresh eye appeal. Designers are also keen on the exercise/workout look, especially for the junior market. The look is casual with '80s references played up. Look for jogging shorts and gym class mesh to get this mood across. Suits that create a cutout look are sexy, while preserving modesty with flesh toned linings. These work best when shown in black or vivid shades.

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against time-tested silhouettes. Shirting too got a fresh spark from the many variations on stripes and plaids, plus subtle details. Denim continued to make its mark with a variety of new treatments and dyes. Outerwear styles relied on basic bodies like the balmacaan and bomber, but were shown in must-have micro twills or supple leather and suede.

The following is a rundown of some of the most noteworthy (and saleable) collections.

JOHN SMEDLEY's spring/summer collection drew inspiration from the freshness and freedom of their classic styles of the '60s. This Brit designer based the line on a signature use of a Sea Island cotton blend and fully-fashioned knitwear expertise. The range was divided into four lifestyle choices — Elegance, Resort, Weekend, and Sport. Influenced by icons such as Sean Connery and Steve McQueen, the first group can be worn for more formal occasions, combining sophistication with sex appeal in core garments. Outstanding is the new Premier blend, a mix of wool and cotton with a cashmere-like hand. For Resort the theme harks back to the '70s glamour and St Tropez. Key colors are hot tropicals combined with acid pastels in easy care packable fine gauge knit and Sea Island cotton. Weekend is totally casual daywear in tonal shades. The ongoing military



SABATO RUSSO

The pairing of earth tones and brights are also eye-catching, while pink (from powder to magenta) combines with brown, making an unlikely, yet sophisticated, color combination. Blue is another strong color trend for cruise. From royal to cerulean, to navy and denim, this color is turning up in every major collection. More fashion-forward customers will go for the neutral palette. This includes, in addition to beige and earth tones, sophisticated shades of olive and brick red. The retro look is also key in swimwear, as well as RTW with hip updates on the '50s — think gingham.

Preceding the runway show, the event got off to an exciting and informative start with a film presentation highlighting suits from the four major categories that make up cruise 2004 swimwear — Play, Adrenaline, Balance, and Expression. These four themes constitute the major moods for the season. As for the fashion show, the following are the hottest and most directional looks of the 93 that paraded down the catwalk.

CHRISTINA SEAMLESS

SWIMWEAR: This is chic in a sophisticated plum color "African Beat" print. The one-piece style features removable bra pads and tie-front detailing. This was shown with a matching pareo. **RALPH LAUREN BLUE LABEL:** A cute blue/white stripe triangle halter top that's paired with solid blue

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trend moves towards a newer work wear feel, spiked with flashes of color. The final group plays up leisurewear in a slightly heavier 24-gauge Sea Island cotton, in intarsia designs. The color palette mixes brights with cool tones for a real sports look.

All-American preppies rejoice! **E. LAND** offered a fresh look at some classic sportswear pieces. For casual workdays, the cotton blend utility jacket paired with classic flat-front chinos and a plaid cotton/linen shirt looks terrific. These are all part of E. Land's Safari Beige range. Also striking in this group are the variations on the Rugby shirt in black/ivory and the silk/linen "reporter" shirt with button roll-up sleeves. "Bright Pacific Course" plays up refreshing weekend looks for the golf course or drinks in the clubhouse. Outstanding are the V-neck linen/Tencel/cotton intarsia sweaters in cheery sorbet colors. As illustrated in our sketch, a light green corn/orange sweater combines with multi-stripped cotton shirt and cotton chinos. The latter comes in a full range of coordinating shades. "Spring Classics" brings the return of the preppy patchwork plaid Bermuda shorts and navy cotton American flag sweater. The navy/red/royal nylon nautical jacket nicely combines form with function when paired with E. Land's "America" sweatshirt, cotton oxford shirt and classic denim jeans.



the finished product business." The same Italian professor who created the first flameproof fabric used for Formula racecar drivers is aiding the company in its efforts. If all goes according to plan, Lenpur will gain brand recognition and the consumer will begin to look for it by name, as they have done with Lycra TM, and Tencel TM.

Organic Trade Association: Growth Potential with Color

The use of organic cotton got started in the early nineties, Association representative Sandra Marquardt informed us. Sportswear companies were the first to embrace organic cotton, following industry leader Patagonia. Patagonia began its program in 1996 and is definitely considered to be pioneers in the organic fiber arena. Their cotton line, which includes the "beneficial tee," is more expensive because organic cotton fiber is costlier than conventional cotton that is grown with use of pesticides. Two years ago, the US alone used a shocking 84 million pounds of pesticides to make its conventional cotton. Furthermore, 10% of all the pesticides used in the world were employed to make conventional cotton, according to the statistics Ms. Marquardt shared with us. Currently, 12-16 countries grow organic cotton, but Texas is by far the largest producer, growing what is known as the shorter staple cotton, which is 1 1/2" long. The longer and finer cotton comes from the West Coast or overseas and measures 1 1/32" and has some stretch to it as well.

Organic cotton has commercial growth potential as it takes color well. One way to deliver a truly "pure" colored product (without using any dyes) is to grow it that way on the fields. So far, there exists a palette of browns, greens and rusts. A mauve color is in the works. This particular colored cotton is called "color grown". The next level in purity is to add metallic fibers to achieve metallic colors. The product would then be labeled "made with organic cotton". As of October 2002, there existed standards only for how cotton is grown in field. The Organic Trade Association is currently assisting in developing processing standards for the cotton.

The Association is endeavoring to reach out to the fashion world and manufacturers with vehicles such as their recent Organic Fiber Fashion Show that took place this past May in Austin. Fourteen companies including Nike participated, and representatives of Donna Karan and Armani Exchange were spotted in the audience. In addition, Ms. Marquardt predicts growth in the spa world. "This area is very key for us now — bathrobes, towels, yoga wear — that whole sector is mushrooming. Patagonia is sharing its knowledge with other companies such as Cutter-Buck (golf wear) and Hannah Andersen (children's wear), who are expanding into the organic arena. The real push now, she concludes, is to create products that are identical to the mass industry but with a twist."

Bernardo, The Fabric Innovator: A Focus on Washable Suede

Bernardo, a hugely successful outerwear company in its fifth season, has grown by leaps and bounds company Sales Executive Rudy DiLieto told us at a meeting in their Seventh Avenue showroom. The founder Stuart Pollack, a Canadian, has come up with a process by which consumers can wash and dry their Bernardo suede garment with Woolite. Eighteen washes are standard, and treated items can be ironed. Additionally, faux shearlings as well as the treated leathers are also completely machine washable. According to Mr. DiLieto, things really took-off for the company when they joined forces with Woolite, increasing Bernardo's sales by 30-40%.

Cost effectiveness is also an essential part of their successful business concept. Their pig and goatskins are treated in a large factory in China and, due to the large volume, the company is able to retail a pigskin coat in their target range of \$99.99-\$129. Higher quality goat suede retails at a higher price point. The philosophy here is very much that "wear now and enjoy it" fashion at a price. There is also a line for juniors and a line for Missy that targets the 30 - 70 year old set.

Although they cater to the fashion customer who craves color (at the time of our interview, there were already 12 approved colors for spring) the best-selling colors are soft neutrals that include "sand", "cigar" and "coffee bean". New

to the company is a sportswear line that mixes wool with leather and suede in the latest silhouettes, such as a "Pocahontas skirt" with whipstitching. For August/September deliveries, Bernardo introduced washable cashmere, which Mr. DiLieto concedes was "a challenge" as the wool outerwear market has been struggling for years. However, he is optimistic that consumers will respond favorably to the convenience and moderate price points: pieces will retail in the range of \$149-\$199. Additionally, there is an ad campaign in the works called "superfashion", which will feature supermodels Molly Simms and Daniela Pestova as Wonder Woman characters.

II. SPRING 2004 and FORECASTING FALL/WINTER 2004/2005

Schumacher Fabrics - Spring 2004

Janice Langrall, the Company's Marketing Director, works on the creative for the company's extensive advertising efforts. She led us through the Schumacher showrooms in the B&B building, highlighting the best of Spring 2004 designs. Some trends immediately emerged.

- 1) Larger scale prints and patterns.
- 2) Bright colors (especially beautiful reds) that boast both clarity and brightness.
- 3) Texture in wovens.
- 4) The influence of the Greek Key design (Janice showed us the print done on an off-white back ground,

rather than the usual).

- 5) Bright white.
- 6) Geometric forms, particularly diamond shapes.
- 7) Very strong are toiles and chinoiserie, especially lacquer red and gold tones.

One of two outstanding (and best-selling) fabrics for Spring is 45% viscose/55% cotton "Valentina Stripe" in an olive green, lime/gold, bronze, pink sherbet and cream stripe with a "glace" finish. "These "gutsier" silk plaids are doing well, they're traditional but at the same time more forward," says Janice. The other is "Paley silk damask, "named for socialite and fashion icon Babe Paley, in a rich chocolate brown and cream, comprised of 60% cotton/40% silk. "Paley" is part of the "statements of luxury" collection. Both fabrics are unapologetically luxurious and expensive. "Paley" is \$138/yd.

Giving us a peek into what to expect for fall 2004, Janice told us that they'd be working with a lot of damask, "used in a contemporary way". She noted that Schumacher's younger audience is responding very favorably to fabrics "that are sumptuous, unfussy and have a clarity and boldness to them".

DuPont Looks Ahead to Fall/ Winter 2004/2005

When it comes to fiber innovation, there's always something new at DuPont. This time, it's the T-400 fiber, a new elastic fiber, which adds three essential qualities to sweaters — stretch, lasting shape retention, and easy wash. Sheila-Mary Carruthers, DuPont Textiles & Interiors Global Knitwear consultant, explained that there are actually two versions of the

textile: the first offers "stain repel", which beads up liquids that spill on a garment. The spill can then be easily wiped-off. The second version, "stain release", is used in the Dockers program. It has met with considerable success in the men's market. Ms. Carruthers jokingly remarked that men actually read the label of the garments they purchase and are intrigued by the "stain release" claims.

Ms. Carruthers also shared upcoming knitwear trends for Autumn '04/Winter '05. Some of the highlights:

- 1) "Respect value": subtle color mixing and the use of Lycra adds loft without weight, for an open and lightweight appearance.
- 2) "Be aware": eclectic mixes of yarn to mimic nature and ethnic inspired Lycra blends. Mixing DuPont's Cordura R and Lycra yields a tough performing fabric. Striped effects are also key elements in this grouping.
- 3) "Showoff": statement knits and extreme yarns in strong colors, but simple designs. These fancy yarns particularly in space dye patterns include Tactel and Lycra. Colors are pink, red purples and blues.

It is interesting to note that at her roundtable presentation, the group was particularly responsive to the "show-off" hot color range, most especially the space-dyed fabrics.

LAMBRETTA delivers cool British casual clothes for the Generation-X urban male. Standouts include the two-toned dark wash/light sand-blasted boot cut jeans in indigo canvas, the bleach-out boot-cut jeans in a snow wash, and some sleek acid wash zip-front jackets in brushed-back cotton. Lambretta also offers an interesting variation on the hoodie. Their version comes in a logo sleeved (cotton/polyester) neoprene in powder, navy, corn and oatmeal. Pigment dyed, raglan shoulder, long sleeved cotton jersey tees with chest badge, or the reverse applique "scooter" tees work well underneath, in shades of claret, corn, navy and pebble. So square they're hip are Lambretta's short-sleeved shirts in pastel or brights, in either an Italian floral print or dobby checked cotton.

NEW MAN's signature looks include soft fabrics and exclusive wash treatments in contemporary sportswear pieces that run the gamut from very casual to relaxed elegance. A spirit of adventure is the Spring 2004 theme, in a palette that starts with white, beige, and khaki and segues to spice tones of deep red, gold and green with brown. Lastly, the palette shifts to bright pastels with hot color accents. Knits have two or three treatments through sponge dying and/or resin washing. Shirts have subtle details woven into the fabric, such as Lurex yarn, and embroidery. Specially treated cottons and denim pants are

offered. Variations include chevron and tic weaves, yarn dyes and chalk stripes. Cottons and linens are washed and treated for a signature look, while exclusive cotton poplin is pigment dyed and washed. The comprehensive shirt collection features lightweight woven jacquard patterns and exotic prints with a soft wash, and every garment is designed as carefully on the inside as it is on the outside.

SABATO RUSSO's collection takes its inspiration from the southeast coast of Italy, with a color palette that reflects the blues of sky and sea and earth tones of sand and sage. Natural cotton and linen are the fabric mainstays of Russo's sportswear, comprised of drawstring, five-pocket, cargo and plain-front pants and shorts, and soft, unconstructed jackets. Sport shirts, linen/cotton/hemp knits and luxurious cotton sweaters complete the picture. For the new suit-based Formalwear Collection, there are essential items in classic shades of black, darkest blue, steel gray, pearl and off-white in top-of-the-line Italian fabrics, including wool/silk blends, super fine wool and pure silk.

At a glance, other noteworthy collections included highlights from **BERETTA**. This prestigious Italian firm features rugged outdoor clothes for the elegant gentleman, in a terrific range of cotton barn and safari jackets and vests, plus coordinating pants, tees and polo shirts in muted earth and natural tones. **SANYO's** zip-front blouson jackets, shirt

jackets, anoraks and toppers are terrific in all-weather high tech and Eco-friendly fabrics with a wonderful hand. London-based **TATEOSSOIAN's** shirt collection is for the up-scale, fashion-forward male. Trendy new techniques dominate the details, such as burnt patterns and pulled-out thread to create textures, zippers to replace buttons, camouflage trimming, contrast stripes, Swiss embroidery and interwoven silver thread. **CREATIONS JEZ INC.** is from Canada. Their line offers lightweight lamb and goat suede unlined shirts, and a stunning reversible to micro twill suede, zip-front blouson. Also from Montreal is **NEIL EDWARD**. Here is stylish outerwear that's both fun and practical. Best items include the Italian goat suede shirt and single-breasted blazer from the "Perkin's Cove" range, and a stunning zip-front sport jacket with zip and flap/patch pocket detailing from the "Balthazar" group. **ALEXANDER JULIAN** has a complete range of long and short sleeved shirtings in a wonderful range of stripes, plaids, checks, plus some terrific sweaters with crew or bateau necklines. One of the most comprehensive collections comes from **BILLS KHAKIS**, with reverse pleat and plain-front pants, to Bermuda shorts, shirts, etc., for the die-hard fan of the classics. From **BARBOUR** comes a total range of preppy inspired jackets and outerwear — everything from the waterproof, breathable cotton 3/4 coat, to a casual safari jacket or quilt nylon vest.

"hipster" boyleg shorts, trimmed in green. **ST. TROPEZ SWIMWEAR:** Another young suit in colors that pop. It's a periwinkle/lime/pink plaid, triangle bra bikini with tummy cover, open back with string ties, and a side-tied bottom. **HOBIE:** This is a terrific looking tankini in white and multi-stripes with overstretch detailing and side-tie bottom. **XOXO:** We love the "Oriental Butterfly" print in this soft cup bra bikini, also with side ties. **OP JUNIORS:** This is a totally adorable bikini with mini skirt that hits all the key trends. It comes in a white/blue/range Asian floral with soft hip tie belt (sketched). **SUMMER GIRL:** The pink and brown halter-top bikini gets a bottom with a bow placed on the side for a playful touch. **PLAYA BY LA BLANCA:** They also offer this directional pink/brown color combination in "Tattoo," a logo print triangle slider halter top and hipster shorts. **ESPRIT BEACH:** More brown/pink,

only this time in an island print soft cup halter-top, tie-back bikini. The boy-cut bottom features tie belt detailing. **BE CREATIVE BY BODY I.D.:** This is a slimming multicolored vertically striped, skirted two-piece suit featuring triangle slide-front top with ties. **LIZ CLAIBORNESWIMWEAR:** A very pretty coral halter two-piece enhanced by tiny white polka dots and a skirted side-tie bottom. **REACTION BY KENNETH COLE:** This is a great looking burgundy/navy/white print underwire, padded bra bikini with sporty navy belted bottom. **BALTEX:** For an elegant take on the nautical look, note this red/navy/white pinstripe soft cup one-piece suit with front-tie detail. **LUCKY BRAND:** An activewear look in burgundy and baby blue with olive trim triangle bikini and belt detailed hipster bottom. This gets a cute matching hooded zip-front "Lucky" vest. **JAG:** They have an adorable pink and white tropical flower print, soft-cup, tie-back bandeau bikini with bow detailed bottom and

matching snap-front shorts.

Cover-ups run the gamut this season with versatile styles that work both on or off the beach. **DOTTI:** Here look for the cute blue striped hooded terry V-neck pullover. **BAHIA RESORT:** Totally sophisticated is the white open mesh, two-piece pullover and pant cover-up (sketched). **MAINSTREAM:** Their blue tropical print halter tankini gets matching print mesh pants. **SIRENA:** Very attractive is a coral "Whoopsi Daisy" embossed one-piece. Its matching mini skirt transforms this into a casually elegant poolside dress.

FI INSIDER

A column devoted to what's hot, happening, and on every fashionista's "hit" list!

Hermes better watch its back! The latest hot item to hit the streets of Italy and pop up on the arm of the trendiest people is the latex handbag. This combination of Kelly and Birkin bag rolled into one comes in three sizes and, best of all, a terrific range of jellybean colors. The bag is a perfect copy, right down to the hardware (offered in either gold or silver). It's available through Tiziani, a brand new, California-based vendor. Call it the "jelly Kelly" or "workin' Birkin" — either way, this is a tongue-in-chic take on a classic handbag! ●

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